

Nights Away Permit Scheme (until May 2008)

An introduction



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0845 300 1818

This is one of a set of factsheets on the Nights Away Permit Scheme.

The Nights Away Permit Scheme has been introduced to promote quality residential or camping experiences for young people. From September 2004, any Leader or other adult leading such an event for young people will need to operate under this Scheme.

The new Scheme introduces the following:

- A **Nights Away Permit** for adults leading camping or residential events for young people. (A Permit is not required for those leading Scout Network events, although notification is – see below).
- An **assessment procedure** for those seeking to hold a Permit.
- **The Event Passport** for young people under the age of 18 years wishing to lead camping or residential events (such as Patrol camps, Unit expeditions etc).
- A **Notification form** to inform the appropriate Commissioner of each nights away event. In the case of Scout Network Members, the County/Area Commissioner (or nominee) is notified.
- The appointment of local **Nights Away Advisers** to give support, make assessments and promote nights away events.

The Nights Away Permit

A Permit is issued under the authority of the District Commissioner or, where appropriate, the County/Area Commissioner.

Once an adult has gained a Permit, they are free to organise nights away events rather like a driver is free to drive on public roads once they have passed their driving test.

The Permit is credit card-sized and gives authority for an adult to lead Members under the age of 18 years on a nights away event in one or more of these three categories:

- **Indoor** – for any Sleepover, indoor Pack Holiday, youth hostelling or similar event.
- **Camp Site** – camping on sites where there are toilets, water and waste disposal facilities.
- **Green Field** – for camping where all facilities need to be provided by the camp team – for example, a summer camp on a farmer's field.

An individual who gains a Green Field Permit is entitled to lead nights away events in the other two categories. Similarly, where an individual gains a Camp Site Permit, they may also lead Indoor events.

A Permit is not required where ALL members of the group taking part in the event are over 18 years (Scout Network or Fellowship events, for example). However, the appointed or agreed leader of the event would be expected to have first hand experience of residential or camping activities and be familiar with The Association's current resources on nights away activities.

Permits are not usually Section specific although adults may apply for one to cover only a particular category. For example, Beaver Scout Leaders may request a Permit to cover one-night Sleepovers only.

The Scout Association

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Permits may be issued to those who do not hold Warrants, for example Instructors, Section Assistants, Fellowship Members or helpers, provided the usual clearances are obtained and the applicant is assessed as suitable.

Assessment

The assessment for a Permit will be based on eight core skills. These are:

1. Planning a nights away event
2. Ensuring the effective administration of an event
3. Preparing and co-ordinating a programme of activities
4. Choosing and preparing the event team
5. Choosing, organising and maintaining the right equipment
6. Ensuring the health, happiness and safety of self and others
7. Organising good catering
8. Making best use of the venue

Most nights away events are group activities, involving a team of adult supporters. The adult leading the event does not therefore need to be an expert in all the areas listed above, provided the skills required are recruited to the team and the staff adequately prepared and led.

The Event Passport

The Scheme encourages residential or camping events led by young people under 18 years, such as Patrol camps, Explorer Scout expeditions or overnight hikes. By using the Event Passport, a Leader can check the young person has the required knowledge and ability to lead the event. The Leader should ensure adequate adult monitoring and support is available throughout. The Event Passport is valid for one event only.

The skills needed are based on the same eight core skill areas listed above. The Passport has room to record useful phone numbers and details of the event, including who took part and possible comments from campsite staff. Afterwards, it may

be kept as proof of the young person's role and achievement.

The Passport issued to a young person must not exceed the category of the Permit holder's Permit. *Event Passports are available on request from the Scout Information Centre.*

Notification and the 'home' District Commissioner

There is no longer a requirement to supply programme and other information three months ahead of an event, as with the Form PC system.

However, the 'home' District Commissioner (or nominee) must be provided with basic information about all overnight activities involving Members under 18 years before a nights away event takes place. Similarly, the County/Area Commissioner (or nominee) is to be notified of Scout Network nights away events.

Notification should include all the information required on the Notification form although this may be conveyed by a method agreed locally, such as email, fax or telephone. Notification should be made by the event organiser.

In the case of Beaver Scout or Cub Scout events, at least seven days notice is required. Less notice is permitted for Scout, Explorer Scout or Scout Network events, but the aim should be to give about one week's notice.

Copies of the Notification form (NAN) are available on request from the Scout Information Centre. Alternatively, they can be downloaded in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format from ScoutBase UK at www.scoutbase.org.uk.

Notification and a 'host' District Commissioner

Where a nights away event is to take place using facilities not belonging to Scouting, and outside the 'home' District, then the 'host' District Commissioner must also be informed, ideally fourteen days before the event begins. This information can be conveniently given using the preprinted Notification form. Notification should be made by the event organiser. Where Scout facilities are used, then the 'host' booking

Secretary, Campsite Manager or other responsible person will become informed as part of the usual booking arrangements, and there is no additional requirement to inform the 'host' Commissioner.

When the event involves travelling through a number of Districts, such as a hike, expedition or narrowboat trip, the Notification form can be sent to the respective County/Area Secretaries.

The address of the host DC or the County/Area Secretary can be obtained from the Scout Information Centre (0845 300 1818) who will require either the name of the Scout District(s) or the postcode of your overnight venue(s).

Nights Away Advisers

District Commissioners are responsible for appointing one or (usually) a number of 'Nights Away Advisers'. County/Area Commissioners should do so where Permits are to be issued to those with County/Area appointments.

The role of the Adviser is to:

- Meet with those adults with experience in leading successful residential events to ensure they understand the workings of the new Scheme. They can then be recommended for the appropriate Permit so that they can continue leading quality nights away events. This is a '*fast tracking*' procedure for experienced adults.
- Meet with those adults who are less experienced to assess them against the eight core skills and as required to assist them to gain an appropriate Permit.
- Advise on camping and residential issues and to generally promote nights away opportunities within the District or County/Area.

Gaining a Permit

An adult wishing to gain a Permit should first obtain factsheet FS120432 (*Application for a Nights Away Permit*). This includes a form which on completion is passed to the appropriate Commissioner or Nights Away Adviser.

The Commissioner delegates assessment of competence to a local Nights Away Adviser. This requires a judgement of the applicant's skills.

The extent of the assessment will depend on what is known of the applicant's experience and abilities. For an experienced Leader (of which there are many in our Movement) or other adult known to run successful camps, then a 'fast track' route is an option. This requires a check that the applicant understands the responsibilities of holding a Permit and has the eight core skills listed.

For a less experienced person, or one whose skills and experience are not known locally, then a practical assessment would be required. This may be based on several meetings with the applicant, covering both the planning and the leading of an actual event. The Leader or adult being assessed would be leading here but working under the direct supervision of an experienced Permit holder.

Assessment is not intended as a gruelling examination but should aim to establish the skill and experience of the applicant, while offering support in acquiring these where they are lacking.

By endorsing the application, the issuing Commissioner acknowledges that the person has been assessed as having the required skills AND has the personal and leadership attributes necessary to lead such events.

The issuing Commissioner is free to restrict an individual's Permit as seem wise. For example, a DC may restrict camping to within the District, or for a specific training period, or for one Section only, or for a specified number of supporting visits.

Permits should be reviewed at the same time as Warrants or at a fixed interval of not more than five years. They may be withdrawn by the appropriate issuing Commissioner at any time.

International events and those in 'adventurous country'

Leaders must also hold an appropriate Permit for nights away events to be held abroad. In addition, completion of Form PC (Abroad) is still required

since this enables access to the support available from the ACC/AAC (International) and the International Department at Gilwell Park.

Some events require a leader to hold an appropriate Adventurous Activity Authorisation (eg in Terrain One and above, or on board vessels).

There is no additional requirement to hold a Permit if the activity authorisation includes an assessment of the skills needed to supervise mountain camping or other residential experience.

Camp or Pack Holiday inspections or visits

There is no requirement under the Nights Away Scheme to enforce standards through a system of inspections. However, a Commissioner may well arrange for a supportive visit should it be felt advisable. A campsite may also wish to continue to provide supportive visits to those in camp or residence.

Publications

Support material may be found in the following publications available from the Scout Information Centre or downloadable from ScoutBase UK (www.scoutbase.org.uk).

- *Policy, Organisation and Rules*
- *Nights Away – An Adults’ Guide to Camping, Holidays, Expeditions and Sleepovers*
- *FS120000 Risk Assessment*
- *FS129999 Safety in Scouting – Safety Checks*
- *FS120432 Application for a Nights Away Permit*
- *FS120433 The Role of the Nights Away Adviser*
- *FS120434 The Nights Away Permit Scheme – Guidelines for District and County/Area Commissioners*
- *FS120078 Home Contacts*
- *FS120080 Pre-event Checklist*
- *FS120626 Avoiding Ill Health in Camp*
- *FS315059 Camping Standards*